11/57

Way to God-Realization

LIBRARY
No.......11/57
Shri Shri Ma Anandamayee Ashram
BANARAS

PRESENTED

by a German Devotee

Hanumanprasad Poddar

Way to God-Realization

LIBRARY
No......11/57
Shri Shri Ma Anandamayee Ashram
BANARAS.

By
Hanumanprasad Poddar

PRESENTED
by a German Devotee
Joli

Gita Press, Gorakhpur
(India)

First Ten	Editions	47,250 Copies,	1937-1961
Eleventh	Edition	10,000 Copies,	1963
Twelfth	Edition	15,000 Copies,	1967
		72,250 Copies	

Price ·35 Paise

Published by Motilal Jalan
at the Gita Press, Gorakhpur.

LIBRARY
No..........11|57
Shri Shri Ma Anandamayee Ashram
BANARAS.

Publisher's Note

The present brochure is an English translation of the *Sādhana-Patha* in Hindi, which has become popular among the Hindi-reading public as a helpful and practical guide to seekers after true happiness. The Hindi original has already undergone sixteen editions and in all 1,00,000 copies of it have seen the light so far. The English edition also has been equally liked by the English-reading public as will appear from the fact that eleven editions comprising 57,250 copies have already been exhausted. The hearty welcome accorded to it by the public makes us confident that the present twelfth edition too will recieve the same patronage from the English-reading public.

—:o:—

Contents

Chap. Page.

I. The Highest Goal of Human Existence 5

II. Dispassion 13

III. The Heart's Aspiration ... 35

IV. Stumbling-blocks in the Path of God-Realization ... 42

V. Factors Contributory to Spiritual Advancement ... 65

VI. Humble Supplication to the Lord 79

VII. Self-Surrender to the Lord ... 90

—:o:—

PRESENTED
by a German Devotee
of Mā

LIBRARY
No.......457
Shri Shri Ma Anandamayee Ashram
BANARAS

CHAPTER I

THE HIGHEST GOAL OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

हरिरेव परं ब्रह्म हरिरेव परा गतिः ।
हरिरेव परा मुक्तिर्हरिर्गेयः सनातनः ॥

—Śrī Vyāsadeva

"Hari (Lord Viṣṇu) is the Supreme Reality; Hari is the highest goal; Hari is final beatitude; Hari is the eternal principle. Sing His praises."

He who endeavours to realize God even in the midst of the manifold difficulties and obstacles by which he is surrounded in this world is, indeed, a blessed soul. Many people in this world do not even believe in the existence of God. Out of those who recognize His existence a large majority do not aspire to attain Him, their intellect being clouded by the thick veil of ignorance, which is the chief characteristic of Tamoguṇa. Even those few who have acquired some idea of the value of God-Realization by listening to sacred discourses and through a study of scriptural texts, covet base worldly enjoyments in lieu of remembering Him and addressing prayers to Him, their intellect being shrouded by manifold desires and ambitions. There are some, more advanced than the latter, who start spiritual practices under the influence of Sattvic impulses of their mind; but they do not pursue them with perseverance and zeal, and having not yet been able to make up their mind as to the goal they have to attain to in life, and having no knowledge of the obstacles that present themselves in the way and how to overcome them, they give up the practice and go astray. The Lord has rightly observed in the *Bhagavadgīta*—

मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद्यतति सिद्धये ।
यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिन्मां वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ॥
(VII. 3)

"Among thousands of men scarce one strives for perfection; of the successful strivers scarce one knows Me in essence."

Notwithstanding all this, the human soul has a natural craving for God; for everyone longs for happiness—for perfect happiness, unalloyed happiness, everlasting happiness. No one in this world hankers for happiness that is limited, happiness which is mixed with unhappiness, of happiness which is shortlived. Of course, very often we seek gratification from a particular pleasure which is limited in character, taking it for the time being to be perfect. Not long afterwards we begin to feel that there is something wanting in that pleasure; and seek to make good the deficiency. This proves that pleasures which have something wanting in them cannot satisfy us for all time to come. We are always in quest of perfect happiness. And perfect happiness, happiness which does not lack anything, is the very nature of God, who is omnipresent, eternal and beyond the conception of time. Thus the various Jīvas (individual souls) are continually approaching God; the home of everlasting bliss, through various paths and with their faces turned in different directions, like so many rivers flowing in different directions and through various channels, ultimately to merge themselves in the ocean. This eternal craving of the human soul for happiness testifies to its longing for union with God. So long as it does not reach its destination, this Godward march will never cease.

But, shrouded as it is by the veil of ignorance, the human soul is unable to comprehend, the true nature of happiness. That is why it encounters manifold obstacles in the way. It sometimes misses the right track, sometimes halts in the journey, sometimes proceeds in the opposite direction, sometimes loses heart and gives up further progress, and sometimes it stops in a wayside inn as if it had reached the destination, or, in other words, it is engrossed in trivial pleasures, mistaking them for perfect happiness. That is why such soul are called low (पामर) or sensual (विषयी). On the other hand, those who have knowledge of their destination and are constantly striving with great assiduity and to the best of their ability to attain it, are designated as practicants (साधक) or aspirants to liberation (मुमुक्षु). Thus, in order to enter the path of spiritual discipline, the first thing one has got to do is to fix one's goal, to determine one's ideal.

What is the Highest Goal ?

One should first of all fix one's goal, the destination of one's journey. So long as one does not make up one's mind as to where one has to go, it is no use talking about the route or the expenses of the journey. Similarly, so long as one does not fix the goal of one's life, the object that one has to attain, it is useless to endeavour to know what path one should follow, and what particular mental discipline he should undergo. In the present age most people are drifting aimlessly, being carried away by the sweeping tide of Prakṛti. They little know who they are, why they have been endowed with a human body and what is the mission of their life. To earn money by fair means or foul, to maintain the family therewith and thus end the career of earthly existence—that is the life-work of the average householder.

It has been stated above, and the experience of every individual corroborates it of everyone of us is in quest of happiness. Now let us consider whether the objects we are busy collecting and preserving are a source of real happiness to us. It is known to all that everything in the world is transitory and perishable. That which is perishable is transient, and that which is transient is bound to disappear one day. That which affords pleasure to us at the time of its acquisition or enjoyment is bound to cause pain when it disappears. Hence everything in this world is painful because it is perishable. Great festivities are held over the birth of a child and we are transported with joy to see an infant sporting in our house; but a day surely comes when either the child leaves us, or we have to depart under compulsion leaving the child behind. Almost all of us have had an experience of the pain felt at the loss of an object which we have held dear to our heart and claimed as our own. Hence our grief at the loss of our son is as intense, if not more, as the joy we felt at the time of his birth or on seeing him frisking about in the courtyard. The same is true of one's wife, parents, teacher, pupil, honour, fame, nay, of the very life as well as the pleasures, of the next world. In short, a transitory object can never give us absolute and perfect happiness. No one contends the fact that all worldly enjoyments are painful in the end. Nay, the pleasure that one derives from the transitory objects of the world will on careful consideration appear as mixed with pain even at the time of its enjoyment.

All the enjoyments of this world as well as of the next are transitory. The *reality* lying hidden behind these ephemeral objects and forms, their basis as it were, is the only eternal substance which is always uniform and indestructible. The *Gītā* tells us of the same in the following verse:—

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः ।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥

"The soul is never born nor dies, nor does it become only after being born. For it is unborn, eternal, everlasting and ancient; even though the body is slain, the soul is not."

That supreme substance is none else than God and to merge one's individuality which is only assumed, entirely in His oneness, so that He alone may remain, is God-Realization and that is the highest goal of our existence. This goal is determined by the constant practice of discrimination between eternal and ephemeral substance, and, therefore the first thing we require, to maintain our progress towards this goal, is dispassion, Vairāgya.

—:o:—

CHAPTER II
DISPASSION

Dispassion (Vairāgya) means the extinction of desire for all objects, whether seen or unseen, heard of or unheard of, pertaining to this world or to the next. So long as worldly objects continue to attract us we cannot steadily fix our mind on our final goal, viz., God-Realization; Dispassion is the only antidote against our fondness for worldly objects. Our attachment to worldly objects is mainly due to the following four causes :—

(1) Consciousness of their reality,
(2) Consciousness of their attractiveness,
(3) Consciousness of their agreeableness, and
(4) Consciousness of their loving nature.

Dispassion is acquired by negating this fourfold consciousness through wisdom or discrimination (विवेक). Hence discrimination between what is eternal and what is non-eternal (नित्यानित्यविवेक) is the first necessity. Discrimination arouses dispassion and the latter in its turn stabilizes and purifies discrimination. Thus the two are more or less interdependent. Of the four causes mentioned above the first is the most tenacious and disappears last of all; it forms the very root of the other three. If the very existence of the world is effaced from your mind, there can be no question of its appearing attractive, agreeable or full of love any longer. But this is something very difficult to accomplish. Hence an aspirant is required first of all to overcome the last three and then to eradicate the first.

Negation of Attractiveness

Consciousness of their attractiveness is primarily responsible for our attachment to worldly objects. The world appears attractive to us simply because of the perversity of our intellect (बुद्धिविपर्यय). This perversity is traceable to Avidyā or nescience, which is a child of ignorance (अज्ञान). It is this Avidyā which makes the unsightly appear to us as beautiful, the evanescent as permanent, pain as pleasure, the impure as pure, the unreal as real and that which is devoid of love as loving. It is Avidyā again which makes everything appear just the contrary, much in the same way as day appears as night and night as day to an owl. It is due to Avidyā that we look upon this frail human body—which is nothing but a bundle of flesh and bone—and things pertaining to it, which are hardly of any worth, as beautiful and pleasing to the eye. A man begins to entertain partiality for that which constantly occupies his mind. And this partiality in course of time develops into a sense of attractiveness which continues to draw his mind towards that object. Now let us consider whether worldly objects are really attractive, or only appear to be so and, in the latter case, what makes them look so attractive.

Careful thought would reveal that worldly objects have got no charm in reality. For instance, what is there in a human body which appears to us so attractive? Of what is it composed? What particular thing is attractive and charming in this rickety frame consisting of bone, flesh, blood, marrow, fat, phlegm, faeces, urine and similar other substances, each of which will produce a nauseating sensation if looked at separately. The same thing is true of other objects. In fact, attractiveness does not inhere in a particular object, it exists only in our conception of it. It is our conception of beauty which gets crystallized into a convention or standard and makes a thing appear beautiful to us.

Dark complexion attracts a Negro as much as fair complexion attracts us. In China, till recently, tiny feet were regarded as an attractive feature in the fair sex. Girls were provided with iron shoes from their very infancy, which stunted the growth of their feet. Although this proved a source of great inconvenience to them while walking, they cheerfully put up with it in order to look beautiful. Ladies belonging to be Marwari community of Rajputana load themselves with unwieldly and uncouth ornaments and other heavy articles of wear merely to have the satisfaction of looking beautiful; whereas Gujerati ladies, who are content with a plain and simple attire, laugh at them. Marwari ladies, on their part look upon the dress of Gujerati ladies with the same sort of feeling. This proves that beauty lies in our conception of it rather than in the object which we call beautiful. It is we who have invested certain objects with a charm by conceiving them as beautiful according to our respective tastes and standards.

Negation of Agreeableness in Objects of Enjoyment

Even granting that worldly objects have no charm, it cannot be gainsaid, one may argue, that they are enjoyable. No, our contention is that worldly objects are not even enjoyable. Electricity does not exist in the bulb which is fixed to the wall of a room. It comes direct from the power-station, where it is generated and stored. Even so enjoyment comes from the Self, which is the ultimate source of bliss, nay, which is bliss itself. If the object itself were a source of enjoyment, it should have afforded pleasure even after it has been fully enjoyed. This is, however, not the case. A hungry person would relish even a piece of stale bread. If he gets delicious food he would heartily enjoy it till he is satiated. He would, however, feel annoyed if he is pressed to have more of it even after satiation. The same articles which he greatly relished only a few moments ago will be an eyesore to him. This shows that pleasure does not exist in delicious food. The fact is that he was feeling hungry and was yearning for something to eat. Once he got it, his mind was at rest for some time—till he felt another want. The blissful nature of the self, the Ātmā, was reflected on the mirror-like mind, which had thus been steadied, and the mind felt gratified as it were. We mistook this pleasure as coming from the object, the food.

There is one thing more to be considered in this connection. If the objects which we seem to enjoy were blissful by nature or really enjoyable, there is no reason why one and the same object should affect different individuals differently according to their temperament or disposition, and according to their attitude towards that object. For instance, the ruler of a particular kingdom conquers and annexes the territory of an enemy state. This incident is delightful to his friends and unpleasant to his opponents. Even though the incident is one and the same, the degree of pleasure or pain derived there from varies. Such is the nature of the pleasure derived from worldly objects. This shows that we have erroneously conceived worldly objects to be the source of pleasure. As a matter of fact, they are as deceptive as a mirage. Thoughts of this kind will help one to negate the sense of agreeableness in objects of enjoyment of the world. Now let us come to the loving nature of worldly objects.

Negation of Love in Worldly Objects

Even granting that our children or friends possess no attractiveness and do not give us happiness, their love, one may argue, is quite evident, and requires no proof. On careful thought, however, even this would appear to be open to question. It is self-interest (स्वार्थ) which masquerades as love in all these cases.

Guru Nanak says:—

"I have seldom found earthly love sincere and true. Our near and dear ones, including our wife, and our most intimate friends, are all actuated by self-interest. All come forward with their professions of love and have fastened their mind with ties of affinity. But all desert us at the last moment, that is the wonder of wonders.

This foolish self does not come to its senses even now, although. I have exhausted all my powers of persuasion in expostulating with it every day. He alone, says Nanak, can cross the ocean of worldly existence, who sings praises of the Lord,"*

Suppose a fire breaks out in the house we live in and we are all buried in sleep, including our wife and children with our ornaments, gold, promissory notes, clothes and other valuable things by our side. We wake up to find ourselves surrounded by flames; we raise a hue and cry, try our best to rescue our wife and children, ornaments and clothes, money and gold without exposing ourselves to risk. Presently the flames get furious and advance rapidly towards us, threatening to devour us. We cannot keep ourselves steady any longer and run for life, leaving everything at the mercy of the flames. Our wife and children whom we held so dear are left inside and cannot be saved. Emerging safe we appeal to those about us to save them, but do not venture inside. Had we loved them truly, we would have gladly laid down our own life to save them. This shows that we are not really bound by ties of love with them but our relation with them is one of self-interest only. We treat them lovingly only so long as our interests are not interfered with. It is said:—

---

* जगतमें झूठी देखी प्रीत ।
अपने ही सुखसों सव लागे, क्या दारा क्या मीत ॥
मेरो मेरो सभी कहत हैं हितसों वाँध्यो चीत ।
अंतकाल संगी नहिं कोऊ, यह अचरजकी रीत ॥
मन मूरख अजहूँ नहिं समुझत सिख दै हारयो नीत ।
'नानक' भव-जल-पार परै, जो गावै प्रभुके गीत ॥

जगतमें स्वारथके सब मीत ।
जब लगि जासों रहत स्वार्थ कछु तब लगि तासों प्रीत ।।

> "All our so-called friends have self-interest as the motive of their friendship. They love us only so long as their interests are served through us."

The frail ties of artificial love are broken the moment one finds one's interests crossed. We bewail the loss of our near and dear ones as well as of our fortune only because our interests have suffered thereby. Here it may be asked whether those who suffer martyrdom in the cause of their motherland are actuated by true love for their country, or are guided by self-interest. True, their love has expanded itself: they are really at a much higher level than those who are self-centred, who have confined their self within very narrow limits. But there is no denying the fact that their sacrifice has gratification of self as its motive. From this it should not be concluded that no one should practise self-sacrifice in noble cause. It should be borne in mind that but for some amount of dispassion even this type of self-sacrifice is not possible. Had the patriot not turned back on petty interests connected with the body alone, the scope of his love could not have been so widened. Nevertheless, such a sacrifice does not necessarily reveal true love for the family, community or country. Happiness here or hereafter fame and self-aggrandisement may be the principal motive underlying such an act of sacrifice. As a matter of fact, even the patriot loves others for his own sake.

We love even our own person for the sake of our happiness. We get anxious to part even with this mortal frame when it begins to interfere with our happiness The fact that we wish to get rid of our body, or even attempt to commit suicide, when we suffer from a very painful disease or are insulted and humiliated, shows that we have no love for our body. Love is offered only to that which deserves it, and the only lovable object is the Self. Real love even for the world is possible only when we look upon it as our very self. That is why the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* says: –

> "A wife is dear to us not for the sake of the wife; a wife is dear to us for our own sake. Sons are dear to us not for sake of the sons; sons are dear to us for our own sake, and so on."*

The same remarks should be understood as applying to the love that others bear for us.

After negating the love of our near and dear ones by trains of thought on the lines indicated above we should lastly proceed to negate the very existence of worldly objects.

---

* न वा अरे जायायै कामाय जाया प्रिया भवत्यात्मनस्तु कामाय जाया प्रिया भवति । न वा अरे पुत्राणां कामाय पुत्राः प्रिया भवन्त्यात्मनस्तु कामाय पुत्राः प्रिया भवन्ति, इत्यादि ।

(II. iv. 5)

Negation of the Existence of Objects

Even though it may be granted that worldly objects are devoid of attractiveness, happiness and love, no one can repudiate their existence. If they do not exist, how do we perceive them, smell them, touch them, speak to them, hear their sound, and so on. This may be answered by saying that when one mistakes a rope for a snake, does he not actually see a snake in the rope? Does he ever see it as a rope? Had it appeared to him as a rope, he had no cause to fear it or recoil from it.

This has been beautifully explained by Goswami Tulasidas in the following memorable lines:—

"O Hari! so thick is the veil of my ignorance that in spite of my seeing things for my self, hearing and saying wise things and understanding them, my doubts and misgivings do not disappear. If the world is unreal, what makes us experience the three kinds of pain? The water seen in a mirage cannot be called real, nevertheless, the optical illusion which makes the desert assume the appearance of a lake causes great affliction to the deer. Suppose a man lying comfortably in a cosy bed dreams that he is drowning in the ocean, and is terrified. He cannot be rescued even by millions of life-boats unless and until he wakes up from the dream. This world is frightful indeed, and appears attractive only so long as one does not look deeply into it. It is delightful to him alone who has attained mental equilibrium, contentment, compassion and discrimination. Although the Vedas declare the whole creation of Brahmā (the creator) to be illusory, no one can overcome the fear of rebirth without devotion to the Lord of the Raghus and association with holy men."*

---

* हे हरि यह भ्रमकी अधिकाई ।
देखत-सुनत कहत-समुझत संसय-संदेह न जाई ।। १ ।।
जो जग मृषा तापत्रय अनुभव होइ कहहु केहि लेखें ।
कहि न जाइ मृग-बारि सत्य भ्रमतें दुख होइ विसेखें ।। २ ।।
सुभग सेज सोवत सपनें बारिधि बूड़त भय लागै ।
कोटिहुँ नाव न पार पाव सो,जब लगि आपु न जागै ।। ३ ।।
अनविचार रमनीय सदा संसार भयंकर भारी ।
सम संतोष दया विवेक तें ब्यवहारी सुखकारी ।। ४ ।।

Kabir also says:—

"All the three worlds are in the grip of delusion; delusion is spread everywhere, Kabir loudly proclaims that we are living in delusion itself."*

The existence of the world has to be negated by such thoughts. But this is as difficult to accomplish as it is easy to talk of. This is generally the outcome of long and diligent practice. A lot of wisdom is required for it. So long as this does not happen, one should continue to negate the attractiveness, agreeableness and loving nature of objects. This constitutes what is known as Vairāgya.

Spiritual Advance is not Possible without Vairāgya

Those who seek to attain the highest goal of human existence without dispassion indulge in the vain attempt to erect a wall in the air. Hence an aspirant should always keep

---

तुलसिदास सब बिधिप्रपंच जग जदपि झूठ श्रुति गावै ।
रघुपति भगति संतसंगति विनु को भवत्रास नसावै ॥ ५ ॥

* भरम परा तिहुँ लोकमें, भरम बसा सब ठाँव ।
कहै कबीर पुकारिकै, बसे भरमके गाँव ॥

the fire of Vairāgya burning within him. He should ponder over the fact that nothing in this world is permanent or lasting; that wealth and prosperity, knowledge and intellectual calibre, power and prestige, accomplishments and embellishments, physical strength and attractive features, youth and comeliness; everything is reduced to dust the moment a man dies. Through pride of wealth we slight our fellowmen, our own brethren. We look down upon others on account of our high birth or learning. We brook no rivals in leadership and amaze others by our brilliant speeches and writings. We claim superiority even over eminent statesmen in diplomacy and political insight. We assert our equality with Karṇa (whose generosity and benevolence have become proverbial) in charity and expect to be called a second Bhīma in physical prowess. We cannot brook a rival in fame and glory. We are very proud of our body, mind and intellect, and never stop to think that all that we are proud of is ephemeral and hollow and may be wiped out of existence any moment. As soon as the body perishes the whole show will come to an abrupt end.

Kabir has made the following observation in regard to this body:—

"The body will be reduced to ashes if cremated, and will be reduced to dust if interred; it has as ephemeral as a jar made of unbacked clay and filled with water."*

He further says:—

"This human body is like a bubble which bursts in no time and will disappear as stars in the morning."†

"You may bask in the sunshine of glory for a few days more. Mind you, you will not be able to visit this town and this lane (which you are inhabiting now) over again.

"The stately mansions which presented a gala appearance and resounded with music for the livelong day are now lying desolate and have turned into a habitat for crows.

---

* जारे देह भस्म ह्वै जाई, गाड़े माटी खाई ।
काँचे कुंभ उदक ज्यों भरिया, तनकी यही बड़ाई ॥

† पानी केरा बुदबुदा, अस मानुसकी जात ।
देखत ही छिप जायगा, ज्यों तारा परभात ॥

"Either today or tomorrow you will have to shift your residence to the dreary forest and your remains will be run over by the plough and overgrown with verdure which will serve as food for the cattle.

"The bones (which we nourish with such meticulous care) burn like dried fuel and the beautiful tresses of hair (which we preserve so scrupulously) burn like straw. Kabir was filled with sorrow to see the whole world on fire.

"The world ignorantly calls the shadow of happiness as happiness and exults over it. (They forget that) the whole universe is food for Death and that a part of it has already found its way into his terrible and gaping jaws while the rest is in his lap awaiting its turn to be consigned to the jaws.

"Even those illustrious sages whose thundering voice rent asunder the mountains and who quaffed the ocean in one draught have been pounded to dust. Who are we to brag and boast ?

"Seeing the gardener approaching the buds exclaim, 'Lo ! the full-blown flowers have been culled ! Tomorrow is our turn,"

"Clay addresses the potter thus:—

'How insolent it is on your part to knead me with your feet ? A day will come when the tables will be turn and you will be crushed under me.'

"We shall all die one day and will be dead for ever; our very names will then be forgotten. Deserting a populous village, we shall inhabit a desolate wilderness instead.

"Despite bragging warriors surrounding him on all sides. Death snatched him away from the heart of the palace; so formidable is Death."*

This is going to be the fate of our earthly existence. Hence we should be well-advised to cease glorying over our short-lived brilliance and to withdraw our mind from the world.

Let us also remember the following lines of Kabir in this connection:—

---

* कवीर नौवत आपनी, दिन दस लेहु वजाय ।
यह पुर पट्टन यह गली, वहुरि न देखौ आय ।।
सातों नौवत वाजती, होत छतीसों राग ।
सो मंदिर खाली पड़े, वैठन लागे काग ।।
आज कालके वीचमें, जंगल होगा वास ।
ऊपर ऊपर हल फिरै, ढोर चरेंगे घास ।।
हाड़ जलै ज्यों लाकड़ी, केस जलै ज्यों घास ।
सव जग जलत्ता देखकर भए कवीर उदास ।।

"They wrap me in a winding-sheet while I am ready to depart. When the vital airs are about to leave the body, the pupils of the eye turn backwards. The body is then taken out from the interior of the house and the palaces and mansions are all left behind. Four pall-bearers lift the bier and take it along the roads and streets crying aloud. None of the belongings accompanies the body except dry fuel."*

झूठे सुखको सुख कहैं, मानत है मन मोद।
जगत चबेना कालका, कछु मुख मँह, कछु गोद ।।
हाँके परवत फाटते, समुँदर घूँट भराय।
ते मुनिवर धरती गले, क्या कोइ गरब कराय ।।
माली आवत देखिकै, कलियाँ करैं पुकार।
फूली फूली चुनि लई, कालि हमारी बार ।।
माटी कहै कुम्हार से, तूँ क्यों रूँदै मोहिं।
एक दिन ऐसा होयगा मैं रूदौंगी तोहिं ।।
मरहिंगे मरि जायँगे, कोई न लेगा नाम।
ऊजड़ जाय बसायँगे, छाँड़ बसंता गाम ।।
आस पास जोधा खड़े, सभी बजावैं गाल।
माँझ महलसे ले चला, ऐसा काल कराल ।।

* हमकों ओढ़ावैं चदरिया, चलती बेरियाँ।
प्रानराम जब निकसन लागे, उलट गई दोउ नैन-पुतरिया।
भीतरसे बाहर जब लावै, छूट गई सब महल अटरिया ।।१।।
चार जने मिल खाट उठाइन, रोवत लै चले डगर डगरिया।
कहतकबीर सुनो भाईसाधो,संगचली वह सूखोलकरिया ।।२।।

It is not possible to develop love for God without cultivating dispassion, and bliss cannot be attained without love of God. One cannot hope to derive bliss from worldly objects which are of an evanescent and transitory nature.

Outward Renunciation is not True Renunciation

According to the above exposition one must constantly endeavour to renounce worldly pleasures. Of course, this does not consist in leaving one's homestead, parents, wife and children and retiring to the woods. True renunciation of worldly enjoyments consists in giving up attachment for such objects of enjoyment. So long as attachment persists renunciation of hearth and home can do no good. Attachment is due to ignorance caused by Avidyā. So long as one's intellect is clouded by ignorance one cannot have real freedom from passion. That is why the Lord says:—

यदा ते मोहकलिलं बुद्धिर्व्यतितरिष्यति ।
तदा गन्तासि निर्वेदं श्रोतव्यस्य श्रुतस्य च ॥

(Gitā II. 52)

> "When your mind will have fully crossed the mire of delusion, you will then grow indifferent to what has been heard and what is yet to be heard about this world and the next".

We should try to shake off this delusion. Until and unless the mind gives up its attachment for worldly objects this delusion cannot be overcome through mere outward renunciation. A Hindi poet says:—

> "It is well that you have got yourself clean-shaved by removing the beard and mousteches, you have not, however, cleansed thy mind which is yet full of mpurities."*

Hence one who seeks liberation should practise real dispassion from day to day, so that he may easily be rid of the bonds of this perishable world, which are a creation of *Māyā*.

This is the only effective means of purging the mind of its infatuation.

—: o :—

---

* दाढ़ी मूँछ मुँड़ाइ कै, हुआ जो घोटम घोट ।
मनको क्यों मूँड़ा नहीं, जामे भरिया खोट ॥

CHAPTER III
THE HEART'S ASPIRATION

Once the highest goal of a man's life is determined his mind is no longer attracted by anything else, belonging to this world or to the next. At this stage the aspirant's heart begins to manifest certain divine virtues, his intellect gradually gets refined and illumined, his senses are brought under control, his mind is withdrawn from worldly enjoyments and is concentrated on God. He finds no difficulty in enduring heat and cold and keeps himself balanced in pleasure and pain. He ceases to have any interest in worldly affairs and develops supreme faith in God and the means of realizing him as well as in the teachings of saints and the scriptures.

He no longer labours under the delusion that he would be satisfied by, or derive supreme bliss from, anything else than God and his mind becomes calm and collected. He feels no attraction for anything else than God: all his activities are directed towards one goal, viz., God-Realization. He yearns for God alone rejecting everything else. This is what they call Mumukṣā (desire for liberation) or Śubhechchhā (noble desire). This Mumukṣā can appear even earlier, but then it is generally not so intense. The Mumukṣā that comes after a man has determined his goal, and is preceded by dispassion and unfoldment of Sattvic virtues is very intense. Śrī Śankarāchārya has mentioned four degrees of Mumnkṣā and called them तीव्र (intense), मध्यम (moderate), मन्द (mild), and अतिमन्द (extremely mild). "Intense aspiration" represents that stage when the aspirant, sore beset and afflicted by troubles of various kinds, deliberately renounces all his possessions, regarding them as harmful. "Moderate aspiration" represents that wavering state of mind in which one is unable to decide whether it is desirable to remain in this world or to renounce it, even after one has experienced the three types of pain* and intellectually recognized the supreme Reality. "Mild aspiration" is that attitude of mind which makes one feel, even after the desire for liberation has appeared in him, that there is ample time as yet and that there is no hurry. He says to himself, "Let me first attend to my worldly affairs and enjoy worldly pleasures. I shall later on find out the means of attaining liberation." There is a fourth class of men who look forward to securing liberation as a windfall while enjoying worldly enjoyments, like one who stumbles on a precious jewel while going his way and picks it up. The mental attitude of such deluded persons is known as an "extremely mild aspiration." It is only after one has been absolved of all sins as a result of austerities practised through successive lives and worship of the Lord that he is seized with an intense longing for God-Realization. Thus seized with a craving for God, a man is able to realize Him during his very life-time—"यस्तु तीव्रमुमुक्षुः स्यात्स जीवन्नेव मुच्यते". On the appearance of this intense longing the devotee does not like anything else. He applies himself heart and soul to those practices whereby he thinks it possible to attain his Beloved, caring little for this world or then next. His longing to see his Beloved makes him mad. He is ready to give up his all, his body, mind and riches, nay, even his duties and religious obligations in order to be able to meet his Beloved. Everything pales into insignificance before his Beloved. He immolates his very being at the altar of his craving for his Beloved.

---

* The three types of pain are: (1) आध्यात्मिक, arising from mental and bodily distemper. (2) आधिदैविक, arising from causes altogether beyond human control, such as excessive rainfall, drought, fall of thunder bolt, earthquakes and so on, and (3) आधिभौतिक, inflicted by other living creatures including human beings.

A saint has described the state of such devotees in the following words:—

"He who is pining to meet his beloved is not deterred in any way, by the distance he has to cover. He does

not even look at the numerous obstacles that present themselves in the way and hurries to where the darling of Nanda plays upon His bewitching Flute."

Such votaries of love care little for their life. Their life's passion as well as all their desires from time without beginning are turned towards one object, viz. their Beloved. Their very soul begins to fly as it were in order to meet the Beloved at the earliest possible moment. A certain writer says: "Just as, on an embankment being swept away by rising floods, the volume of water rushes and inundates all the villages beyond it, even so the dam of thirst for worldly pleasures (विषयतृष्णा) being swept away, the powerful and irresistible flood of divine love inundates the whole being of the devotee and sweeps away all impediments and barriers. No worldly temptation, however strong, is able to arrest his onward march, which becomes as rapid as the movement of a love-smitten damsel going to meet her beloved. He turns his face towards Infinity and struggles hard to unite himself with the ocean of supreme bliss. He gives up attachment for his home and family and, withdrawing his mind from everything else, exclaims with Lalitakiśori, the poet-saint of Brindaban:—

"I would rather roam about in the woods than dwell in palaces built of precious stones. I feel happy in lying on bare ground under creepers and have no liking for a bed, I prefer resting my head on one my arms and never think of a cosy pillow. My mind takes delight in muttering the name of Hari.

"Tarry not; my Beloved (Śrī Rādhā) pray. cast thy favourable looks on me. Grant the boon that I may roam about on the banks of the Yamunā and frequent the alleys of Gahvar (one of the favourite resorts of Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa) morning and evening. Let me behold the soul-enthralling beauty of the Divine couple (thyself and thy Lover, Śrī Kṛṣṇa) and bring me in close touch with your loving devotees, Lalitakiśorī is afflicted in body and mind and longs for residence in the blessed Brindaban"*

---

*वन वन फिरना बेहतर हमको रतनभवन नहिं भावै है।
लता तरे पड़ रहनेमें सुख, नाहिन सेज सुहावै है॥

The only ambition left in his mind is that of beholding the Darling of Nanda, the beloved lord of Vraja, and he expresses the following sentiments:—

"The sole desire I cherish in my heart is that I may behold the sportive Lord every day under the banyan tree known by the name of Vaṃśīvaṭa on the bank of the river Yamunā; that I may lose all consciousness of my body on hearing the heart-captivating notes of His divine Flute; that I may cast away my body and mind in exchange for a thrilling vision of the beautiful limbs of my Beloved that I may please my beloved Śyāmasundara by singing His praises and adorn His beautiful neck with a necklace of Guñjā seeds and forgetting the whole world in the ecstasy of that rare joy, may chant the word Śyāma' and 'Śyāma' alone."

—: o :—

सोना कर घर सोस भला अति तकिया ख्याल न आवे है ।
'ललितकिसोरी' नाम हरीका जपि-जपि मन सचु पावे है ॥
अब विलंब जनि करौ लाडिली, कृपा-दृष्टि टुक हेरो ।
जमुना-पुलिन, गलिन गहबरकी बिचरूँ साँझ-सबेरो ॥
निसिदिन निरखौं जुगल-माधुरी, रसिकनते भट भेरो ।
'ललितकिसोरी' तन-मन व्याकुल श्रीवन चहत बसेरो ॥

CHAPTER IV

STUMBLING-BLOCKS IN THE PATH OF GOD-REALIZATION

A genuine desire for lasting happiness, once stimulated, does not generally grow feeble; but in the beginning the aspirant has to face a number of obstacles. Hence one should always be on the alert to guard against them. The following are some of the main obstacles:

Indifferent Health

The foremost obstacle is loss of health. Hence an aspirant should practise self-control and regulate his diet in order to preserve his health. One can pursue the path of spirituality only so long as one's health is unimpaired. It is well-nigh impossible to carry on spiritual practices with a diseased body. Of course, God-Realization, and not the enjoyment of worldly pleasures, should be the object of preserving one's health. But it should be remembered at the same time that God-Realization is impossible without spiritual discipline and that a healthy body is indispensable for such discipline. Hence one should observe such rules of sleep, work and diet etc. as may maintain one's body in sound health. Living in natural surroundings, regular exercise and the practice of Āsanas (keeping the body in certain Yogic postures) are very beneficial for health

Immoderation in Diet

The next obstacle is impurity of food and immoderation in diet. In nine cases out of ten it is immoderation in diet which is responsible for impairing the health. Nay, it gives rise to mental diseases also. That is why our scriptures have laid so much stress on purity of diet. Our mind is moulded according to the food we take. It is the kind of food we take that determines our ideas and feelings, our intellect and inclinations. Those who take meat, wine and other similar Tamasic substances are found to be very hard-hearted, cruel and ferocious. They do not feel any compunction in killing innocent creatures. Tamasic and Rajasic diet induces evil propensities like lust, anger, avarice, infatuation, pride, jealousy and so on, which mar the physical and mental health of the aspirant, and the result is that he strays from the path of God-Realization. Articles of food containing an abundance of chillies and salt and those which are too sour, too pungent, too bitter, over-hot, or too dry, are classed as Rajasic; while that which is stale, putrid or impure or gives a bad smell, and leavings of dishes have been recognized as Tamasic. An aspirant should eschew condiments as far as possible. Too much of ghee (clarified butter) and sweets too is not desirable. Curds should also be avoided as far as possible. Intoxicants should never be taken. Costly diet too is not suitable for an aspirant, no matter whether he is rich or poor. Too much expenditure on food on the part of a wealthy man not only constitutes an aberration (प्रमाद) but also exerts an unhealthy influence on those who are not well off. It sets a bad example before them and tempts them to follow his ways. Even though they have no money, their love of dainty dishes compels them to resort to unfair means such as theft etc. in order to be able to purchase costly food. Food purchased with money got by unfair means exerts an unwholesome influence on the mind; hence food purchased with rightfully earned money is held to be purer than that which, though cooked in the house of a man of high pedigree, has not been so purchased. Food cooked in the house of a Śūdra, who is truthful who earns his livelihood by fair means, who has control over his senses and who is righteous and simple-hearted is purer and more faultless than that served by a man of high pedigree who practises burglary, takes meat, robs others of their money, is given to chicanery and double-dealing and is addicted to bribery, adultery and wrong-doing for the food belonging to the former will not corrupt the mind and intellect of one who takes it. Again, it is better to take scanty meals as far as possible.

Scepticism

The third obstacle is scepticism. A man takes to spiritual practices at the instance of another but is not able to achieve success immediately, so that he begins to doubt the efficacy of the practices he has undertaken. Even good and devout souls are prone to such scepticism. From time to time the aspirant begins to doubt whether God really exists, and, if He does, whether he will be able to realize Him, whether the practice he is engaged in is sound or not; had it been sound, he should no doubt have been benefited by it; since he has not been benefited, there must be something wrong with it. Thoughts of this nature slacken his efforts. Slackness of practice makes his progress still slower, and this, again, goes to confirm his doubts. Thus gradually he abandons the pursuit of Sādhanā. The first requisite therefore, for an aspirant is firm belief in the existence of God. The next thing he is required to do is to persevere in his spiritual practices with a strong faith in their efficacy. Just as a man suffering from a number of diseases does not notice any improvement even when cured of one or two symptoms by the use of a particular medicine, even so the disappearance of some amount of impurity from a heart which is full of impurities is not perceived. But one should entertain the firm conviction that earnest spiritual endeavour can never go in vain; the farther one advances on the path the more benefited he will feel. He will then come to realize that what is heard and said about God is not mere fiction, but unquestionably true.

Want of a Sadguru

The guidance of a Sadguru (a God-inspired teacher) is necessary to enable one to undertake and diligently pursue such practices. It is absence of a Sadguru that keeps an aspirant in the dark about true Sādhanā (spiritual discipline) and that, again, is responsible for his losing faith in Sādhanā (effort) and abandoning it altogether. This is a matter requiring serious thought and consideration; for at the present moment there is a great dearth of really selfless and experienced spiritual guides or Sadgurus. Although the number of Gurus has considerably increased—you find any number of them wherever you cast your glance,—a large majority of them are hypocrites, immoral, covetous of others' wealth and wife, seekers of fame and eager to receive homage. They declare themselves as devotees exclusively attached to God and as the highest Jñānīs, nay, even as incarnations of God Himself, though destitute of Sādhanā. That is why even genuine teachers are held at the discount today. Under such circumstances it is very difficult to select a Guru. Nevertheless, as a general test it may be indicated that there is no harm in following the instructions of a selfless man, who does not covet money on any account, who does not seek the company of women, whose dealings are straightforward and honest and whose precepts, if followed, are conducive to real good. It is better to avoid the company of the so-called Gurus who talk of and seek wealth and women, who preach the cult of spells and incantations, genii and goblins and miracles. But on getting into touch with a really good soul one should never give up the practices recommended by him. So long as one does not detect any serious fault in him, one should never suspect him and should diligently pursue the path prescribed by him. Changing the Guru every now and then causes great confusion in the Sādhanā. Even genuine Sādhakas endeavour to attain God through different paths; though the goal is the same, the paths leading to it are many and divergent. Suppose one takes to the practice of Prāṇāyāma (control of breath) today at the instance of a particular Guru, and starts practising other forms of Haṭhayoga the next day on the recommendation of another; on the third day he begins to repeat the name of the Lord, and on the fourth he is led by the discourse of a fourth man to take to an inquiry on Vedantic truths. One cannot succeed in any practice whatsoever by knocking about like this and changing one's Sādhanā every now and then. That is why single-minded devotion to one path and strict adherence to the instructions and guidance of a Sadguru is very essential for spiritual progress.

Want of Regularity

Going to bed and rising and taking one's meals at regular hours is very helpful in developing the power of concentration. Want of regularity is a great obstacle in Sādhanā. Absence of any rule is bound to create disorder in the daily routine, and life is frittered away in a haphazard manner. Out of the twenty-four hours constituting a day and night one should fix and set apart at last three hours for remembrance of God and meditation. In case it is not possible to devote three hours to this work at a stretch, the aspirant should divide the period between morning and evening; but he should positively bear in mind that the time, place, posture and procedure of meditation and worship should not be changed every now and then.

Publicity

Another very serious obstacle to spiritual progress is the coming of an aspirant into the limelight. When people come to know that a particular man is given to spiritual pursuits, he, naturally becomes an object of reverence for some people. Those who look upon him with reverence begin to pay him their homage. The number of persons to whom honour and respect is loathsome has always been very limited in this world. An aspirant after all is a human being, and honour, respect and special attention naturally attract him. That is why the more he receives them, the keener grows his desire to win greater honour from a larger number of people. The result is that his efforts which were originally directed towards God-Realization are now transformed into a means for securing honour and respect. It becomes then the goal of his life to perform such actions, to utter such words and to adopt such behaviour and conduct as are calculated to bring him honour. Thus even as he grows slack in his spiritual Sādhanā his spiritual glow, desirelessness, indifference, straightforwardness and faith in God begin to dwindle; vices like sycophancy, covetousness, partiality, duplicity, irreverence and a tendency to engage in anti-spiritual activities begin to grow, which degrade him and place him under the thumb of his admirers. Even these admirers are no longer sincere in their admiration and the homage he receives from them is no longer genuine. Eventually the Sädhaka and his admirers both deflect from the path of spirituality and fall into the mire of sins. Men of a Tamasic disposition, hostile as they are to those who perform noble deeds and virtuous actions, are never lacking in the world. They now get a special opportunity to lower the aspirant and his followers in the eyes of others. They employ all their resources to degrade him and his associates and the result is that enmity is established between the two parties. The energies on both sides are spend in mutual recrimination and fault-finding, and in trying to humiliate and degrade one another, so that their life becomes miserable and full of unrest. The Sattvic heart of the aspirant now gets clouded by Tamas and is filled with anger, infatuation and hypocrisy. Taking all these evils into consideration an aspirant should never seek to come into the limelight. He should try to maintain strict secrecy about his spiritual practices. He should under no circumstance accept the role of a preacher or Āchārya (head of a religious sect); his welfare lies in the people not recognizing him as superior to themselves in any way In other words, an aspirant should never give publicity to his spiritual practices or make a display of them. He should never regard himself as superior to others; for in that case he will be tempted to pride on his superiority and look down upon others. An aspirant who regards himself or shows himself to be more advanced than what he actually is, is bound to fall; nay, there is every risk of his falling even if he discloses his real position in spiritual evolution. The welfare of an aspirant lies in the world recognizing him less than what he really is. 'Externally appearing quite humble, but internally rising in the scale of spiritual evolution'—this is the most salutory method to be pursued by a spiritual aspirant.

Sophistry

Another obstacle to spiritual growth is an excessive development of the reasoning faculty. It is impossible to maintain one's faith in spiritual practices when one is inclined to indulge in sophistical reasoning at every step. Want of faith naturally weakens the desire to lead a life of spiritual discipline. Although in this age of hvpocrisy, double-dealing and outward show the development of the reasoning faculty is very necessary to enable one to escape the clutches of impostors and so-called Gurus, who are veritable wolves in sheep's clothing, yet an excessive development of this faculty makes a man sceptical, and it becomes extremely difficult for him to pursue any form of spiritual discipline in right earnest. That is why the Lord says: 'संशयात्मा विनश्यति' (the doubting man perishes). It is no doubt desirable to have recourse to reasoning for sifting the truth, but it is altogether undesirable to fall back upon sophistry out of abstinacy and pride. An aspirant who has no faith in the scriptures and the words of a Sadguru can never investigate and arrive at the truth. Hence one should always guard against sophistry.

Discontinuance of Practice

Another obstacle to spiritual progress is what is known as 'स्त्यान' or discontinuance of practice. The mind begins to revolt after one has pursued a particular form of spiritual discipline for some time. An aspirant genarally takes to a particular form of discipline with very high hopes. When these hopes are not realized after some effort on his part, he loses interest in his Sādhanā and ultimately gives it up. The mind never remains idle. When it withdraws from noble pursuits, it occupies itself with evil projects, and the result is a sure downfall. Hence an aspirant should never allow his zeal to flag and should not give up his Sādhanā.

Contentment with Partial Success

Another obstacle is complacence in the matter of Sādhanā, that is mistaking partial success for complete success and giving up Sādhanā. A man engaged in spiritual practices experiences a unique joy as he advances on the path of God-Realization. Men who are steeped in the world cannot even dream of that bliss. Having tasted a bliss the like of which he had never experienced before, a bliss altogether different from that derived from worldly enjoyments, the aspirant persuades himself to believe that he has attained perfection. He forgets that the bliss which he now enjoys is only an iota of the supreme bliss which he had proceeded in search of; that it is only a corner of one of the outhouses of the royal mansion to which he is bound. That is why he rests contented with a small drop of the limitless ocean of unique bliss which he would have otherwise attained, and no longer deems if necessary to proceed further. A number of auspicious omens appear before aspirants as they proceed along the spiritual path. Some find themselves immersed in a vast ocean of tranquillity, others find their mind merged in transcendental bliss; there are still others who visualize the world as overflowing with perennial joy. A fourth class of aspirants are blessed with a sight of the supreme effulgence (परम ज्योति). Some, again, hear marvellous divine melodies, while some behold miraculous ecstatic visions. All these are auspicious signs no doubt; but one should never rest contented and imagine that he has attained perfection. To rest on one's oars after making a little progress is a very serious obstacle. A man can never reach his destination by breaking his journey and setting down in a wayside inn, taking it to be permanent abode.

Desire

The craving for worldly enjoyments is another obstacle. Absence of dispassion is the root cause of desire. An aspirant whose mind is not altogether free from worldly desires has to encounter serious obstacles in the path of God-Realization; for it is desire which successively takes the form of anger, infatuation, loss of memory and loss of reason and ultimately brings wholesale ruin to the aspirant. It is impossible for a mind which always feels drawn towards the objects of senses to remain constantly fixed in God; hence one should always keep the mind under control and free from desires.

Want of Continence

Another obstacle to spiritual growth

is want of full continence. One cannot achieve success in the path of spirituality without ओजस्, the vital principle. And for the maintenance of ओजस्, continence is very necessary. An aspirant who belongs to the Brahmachārī (celibate) class or is a Vānaprastha (an anchorite living in forests) or a Sannyāsi (recluse) should invariably observe complete continence. Even married men and women should practise continence to the best of their ability in order to be able to tread the path of spirituality. They should not hesitate to take a vow of complete continence after they have been blessed with a son. But those who tread the path of spirituality should not mind even the absence of a son. One is not blessed with a human body merely for procreation. The human body is meant for attaining the supreme wealth viz., God. Hence one should not break the vow of continence as far as possible, even for the sake of begetting children. Of course, it is essential that the vow of continence should be taken by married couples with mutual consent, otherwise various other difficulties may arise. Either of the couple who appreciates the value of continence should convince the other of its utility without having recourse to coercion to bring round the latter to his or her views. This being done, they should practise continence as far as possible. It should always be borne in mind that the more one observes continence the quicker will be one's progress in the path of God-Realization.

Undesirable Company

Another serious obstacle is bad company. Even those who are much advanced in spirituality are found lapsing into sin under the influence of bad company. The company of those who actually indulge in sinful pursuits should invariably be avoided; nay, the company of even those who, though proclaiming themselves saints, devotees, Yogīs or Jñānīs (enlightened souls), appear to possess vices like chicanery and double-dealing, luxury and self-indulgence, love of wealth and woman, love of idle gossip and reviling others' pride, arrogance, villainy and hypocrisy etc. is bad company. For those who possess all these vices can never be true saints, devotees, Yogīs or Jñānīs.

Bad company induces irreverence for God, true religion, morality and spiritual practices. One who hears it said now and then "What is there in the company of holy men? Where is God? Of what utility is Dharma?" naturally develops irreverence for all these. Similarly, constant talk of worldly enjoyments begets attachment to them, and hearing of others' weaknesses arouses contempt and dislike for those people. The desire for women, wealth, progeny, honour etc. is awakened and grows, a tendency for captious reasoning increases. Rajasic and Tamasic propensities receive encouragement. Vices like dissimulation, pride, arrogance, anger, harshness and ignorance begin to appear in the heart. Selfishness and hypocrisy grow. The mind becomes restless.

People whose mind is unknown to evil thoughts must be few and far between in this world; for accumulated impressions of evil deeds committed in the immediate or remote past linger in the mind of almost every one of us. One who has performed purely good deeds, in the past will not get a human body, which is a result of actions of a mixed type. Thoughts that appear in one's mind originate from the impressions of past actions. Evil thoughts, however, are not translated into action if one's faculty of discrimination is strong. In such cases they disappear as soon as they arise in the mind. If, however, such ideas receive encouragement through bad company, they become irresistible. They appear in the form of ripples and take no time in developing into a vast ocean, which engulfs as aspirant and deflects him from the path of God-Realization once for all.

Bad company does not consist in the fellowship of undesirable man alone. The land, surroundings, literature, pictures, ideas and sentiments or even words which induce bad ideas are all included in bad company. One should not live in a place the atmosphere of which is predominantly Tamasic. One should not witness dramatic performances, games, cinema shows, pictures of other sights which tend to stimulate lust, anger, avarice, infatuation, pride, rancour etc. One should never read such books or periodicals as are likely to arouse evil ideas in the mind. Most of the newspapers of today contain articles and illustrations which foster censoriousness and a tendency to revile others as well as the desire to acquire objects of enjoyment. One should, therefore, avoid them as far as possible It is never desirable to hear and mentally dwell on topics, which are likely to create evil impressions on the mind. One should give up hearing and uttering words which may sow the seeds of and promote hatred, rancour, enmity, lust, anger, avarice etc. An aspirant should also avoid as far as possible the company of those who are given to adultery and wrong doing, who bear ill-will against others without any rhyme or reason, who are hostile to saints, holy men and holy books, who disprove the existence of God and practise dissimulation, who are proud and given to vilifying others, greedy, unjust and captious.

Censoriousness

Another stumbling-block in the path of God-Realization is censoriousness. An aspirant should have nothing to do with what others do. He should constantly apply himself to the work of self-purification. An aspirant should be ever so busy with his own spiritual practices that he should have no time to perceive the faults of others. They who are in the habit of looking at others, faults cannot remain steady, much less advance, on the path of God-Realization. All aspirants would do well to remember the following couplet of Sri Narayana Swami:—

तेरे भाएँ जो करौ भलो बुरो संसार।
नारायन तू बैठिके अपनो भवन बुहार॥

"You should not mind what the world does, be it good or evil. O Narayana, you should sit down and clean your own house."

When the faults of others cease to appear, there can be no question of criticizing them. One should observe one's own faults and try to eradicate them as far as possible.

Sectarianism

Another serious obstacle is sectarianism. This makes even the virtues of others appear as faults on account of their not being sanctioned or approved by one's own sect or creed. This does not mean that an aspirant should give up his fidelity to the traditional line of teachers of the school to which he may belong, or that he should cease to follow with faith and devotion the spiritual discipline chalked out for him by a Sadguru. It is, in fact, the paramount duty of an aspirant strictly to adhere to the instructions and teachings of a Sadguru: but it is never desirable to use reproachful language against other faiths or look down upon others, and criticize, expose or refute the conception of God and spiritual discipline of others, or attach exclusive importance to external form and practice out of sectarian bliss.

—:o:—

CHAPTER V

FACTORS CONTRIBUTORY TO SPIRITUAL ADVANCEMENT

Spiritual discipline or Sādhanā should be pursued with great deligence and application, bravely brushing aside obstacles and difficulties that may come in the way. The sage Patañjali says in his *Aphorisms on Yoga*:—

> स तु दीर्घकालनैरन्तर्यसत्कारासेवितो दृढभूमिः ।
>
> (I. 14)

"Practice becomes stable only when it is repeated uninterruptedly and in right earnest for a long time."

Three things have been inculcated herein, viz., (1) that practice should be continued for a considerable length of time; (2) that it should be pursued without interruption; and (3) that it should be carried on in right earnest and with devotion,

Prolonged Practice

It is not possible to attain the Reality the goal of all spiritual discipline, through inadequate effort. One should go on with the Sādhanā till the desired goal is reached. It is not necessary to give up the Sādhanā even after the goal has been reached. When the spiritual life is begun a course of discipline is undertaken as a means to an end, and after the end has been realized the practice becomes habitual with the practicant. A feeling of gratitude too does not allow him to give up a practice which enabled him to attain the object of his desire.

People who aspire to achieve great results through inadequate effort and shirk labour generally fail to attain the highest truth. The traveller in this path must be daily and hourly fed with a new zeal, a new and indefatigable spirit. They who are slothful and get tired after a small amount of exertion cannot tread this path. An earnest seeker will firmly proclaim like the Buddha: —

इहासने शुष्यतु मे शरीरं त्वगस्थिमांसं प्रलयं च यातु ।
अप्राप्य बोधिं बहुकल्पदुर्लभं नैवासनात् कायमनश्चलिष्यते ॥

"Let my body be shrivelled up on this seat; let my skin, bones and flesh wear away; my body and mind shall never stir from this seat till I have attained wisdom, which is difficult to attain even through Sādhanā pursued through a number of cycles."

Such a seeker cares not for length of time. He is bent on attaining the object of his desire, no matter how much time it may take.

Ceaseless Effort

Prolonged practice does not mean that one should continue the practice for years together without any system. When this impulse comes, or when there is time, something is done; otherwise the practice is conveniently deferred for some days. One who is truly and fully earnest in spiritual practice can never proceed like this. One whose throat is totally parched cannot be satisfied with anything else than water. He will remain uneasy till water is obtained, and every moment till the thirst is satisfied he will think of water and water alone. Similarly, one who is athirst for God would not rest contented even for a moment; he would remain absorbed in the thought of God day and night. Everything else than the course of spiritual discipline he is engaged in will have a secondary importance for him.

Faith and Reverence

An aspirant who is thus engaged in constant practice does his work with a heart full of great reverence and devotion. They who carry on their Sādhanā like one engaged in forced lobour or do it in a desultory and half-hearted manner have no respect for it. One cannot derive full benefit from a Sādhanā unless one has got respect for it. He who pursues a course of spiritual discipline simply for show or merely for diversion or recreation has really no faith in his Sādhanā.

A devout aspirant follows the path of spiritual discipline as his paramount duty in life. It is essential, therefore, that an aspirant should have full faith in the Sādhanā in which he is engaged. Without faith it is not possible to achieve success in any undertaking whatsoever. The Lord says in the *Gita*:—

अश्रद्धया हुतं दत्तं तपस्तप्तं कृतं च यत् ।
असदित्युच्यते पार्थ न च तत्प्रेत्य नो इह ॥
(XVII. 28)

"An oblation which is offered a gift given, an austerity practised, and whatever good deed is performed, without faith, it is all termed as naught; therefore, it is of no avail here or hereafter."

Faith is the sheet-anchor of an aspirant. Unnerved by the knocks of doubt and sophistical reasoning, he who is devoid of faith is eventually compelled to give up his Sādhanā.

Living in Seclusion

The Lord has enjoined a life of seclusion and aversion to the company of men (विविक्तदेशसेवित्वमरतिर्जनसंसदि) for those who tread the path of Knowledge. For maturing one's Sādhanā solitary life is must essential too. But in a majority of cases such seclusion proves harmful when the practice is started abruptly and carried on for a long time to the exclusion of all other activity and responsibility without developing the fullest devotion to spiritual practice. Hence a beginner would be well advised to retire into solitude for an hour only to begin with, for practising meditation and saying his prayers to God. He should extend the period gradually if he finds that his mind is not harassed in solitude by frivolous thoughts, indolence and drowsiness. One should try one's best to set apart at least one day in every week, four or five days in a month, and a month in every year, and devote the periods exclusively to spiritual practices and exchange of thoughts about God. The wholesome spiritual food that the mind will get from such a programme will be very helpful in maintaining the soundness of the mind.

But he who takes to a solitary life without previous practice exposes himself to the risk of falling a victim to error, sloth, sleep, evil practices and other vices of a Tamasic nature. Since he is not habituated to Sādhanā. time begins to hang heavy on his head, and, having no ordinary work to do, he falls an easy prey to frivolities and slothfulness. The tendency perceived in a large number of Sadhus and recluses of the present day to smoke and take intoxicating drugs, to indulge in idle gossip and worldly talk is mainly attributable to the fact that they have ample time at their disposal but no work. That is why, falling in bad company, they contract a number of vices. Sons of aristocrats and well-to-do persons get spoiled mostly because they have ample time but no work. They have no indulge in vain pursuits in order to while away time. Human life is too precious to be frittered away in playing at cards, dice and chess, in idle gossip and tattling about others, sleeping away the whole day, and committing sins. Hence while realizing the necessity of living in solitude and gradually lengthening its period for practising remembrance of God, an aspirant should keep himself engaged in some responsible work whether it is service of others or one's own private work,—every good work performed as an offering to God and without attachment being reckoned as his worship. When you are occupied with some work, the mind will hardly get time to indulge in idle thoughts or frivolous pursuits. Of course contemplation on God should not be given up even while you are doing some work; on the other hand, work should be done with your mind fixed all the time on God. That is why the Lord says to Arjuna, 'मामनुस्मर युध्य च' (At all times think of Me and fight). One should never deliberately shirk one's legitimate duties and responsibilities, but should discharge them with the mind fixed on the Lord. Contemplation on God first and performance of duty afterwards. The Lord speedily redeems those who perform their duties for His sake with their mind fixed on Him as pointed above. The Lord Himself says:—

तेषामहं समुद्धर्ता मृत्युसंसारसागरात् ।
भवामि नचिरात्पार्थ मय्यावेशितचेतसाम् ॥
(Gītā XII. 7)

"These, Arjuna, I speedily deliver from the ocean of birth and death, their mind being fixed on Me."

Real seclusion consists in the absolute merging of one's mind in God. External seclusion is resorted to only with a view to securing the inner seclusion.

An aspirant should always maintain piety in his dealings. To endure sufferings and hardships calmly, repay anger with forgiveness, hatred with love, imprecations with benedictions and injury with service, to regard oneself as the humblest of all creatures, to arrogate no importance to one's own self, to find fault with none, to treat no one with contempt; to criticize none, to look upon another's wife as one's own mother or as image of God, to practise moderation in diet and recreation, to speak sparingly, to refrain from useless talk, to speak truthful and agreeable words, to be ready to serve all to the best of one's ability without priding oneself on such service, to reckon the services rendered by him as an essential part of his duties rather than an obligation on others, to observe defects in the services rendered and to do one's best to remedy them, to expect no return for services rendered, to bear oneself humbly before all, to behave politely with everyone, to gratify one's parents, teachers and other elders through service to feel compassion for the poor and the afflicted and to prepare oneself for the greatest sacrifice in their cause, to give up as poison the desire for honour and distinction, to shun a place where one is likely to receive honour and distinction, to avoid all chances of hearing one's own praise, to avoid participation in any work of arbitration, to keep oneself aloof from societies and associations, to keep away from literature not helpful to spiritual advancement, to shun as far as possible weddings and other social functions and large gatherings of men, never to condemn other faiths, to be guileless and straightforward in one's dealings with others and to be ever on one's guard against hypocrisy etc. are included in saintly conduct. The more an aspirant develops these virtues, the more he will advance on the path of spiritual discipline.

An aspirant should always carefully observe in what direction the bark of his life is proceeding. If he finds that it is moving in the direction of divine virtues, it should be understood that he is advancing; if, however, he finds that it is proceeding in the wrong direction, it should be taken as an index of retrogression. This is the only criterion. Devotion or wisdom does not consist in the mere talk of it. This should be taken as an axiomatic truth. Those who are advancing on the path of Devotion or spiritual enlightenment needs must manifest divine virtues.*

Caution against Sins

Finally, an aspirant should always beware of sins. A sinful propensity always appears in the mind like a ripple, but, if allowed to stay, it assumes great dimensions in no time and engulfs the victim. Hence even the slightest tinge of a sin should never be ignored, no matter whether it is bodily or mental. The presence of a snake or an armed bandit in one's house is not so dangerous as that of the minutest sin in one's mind.

Some people irresponsibly say that sin is ingrained in human nature or that it is

---

* For a detailed exposition of the divine and demoniac properties see Discourse XVI of the *Gita*. If possible, one should read this discourse and muse on its contents every day and make full endeavour to develop divine virtues and get rid of demoniac properties.

LIBRARY
No. ......
Shri Shri maye
BANARAS.

decreed by Providence that a man should commit sins; but this is entirely wrong. It is neither in the nature of a human being to commit sins, nor is it decreed by Providence that he should do so. Such ingenious arguments are advanced only by those habitual sinners who, though indulging in sins, seek to exonerate themselves by laying the blame at the door of human nature or Providence. These are, really speaking, nothing but flights of fancy indulged in by feeble minds. The human nature, on the contrary, is to guard against sins and to develop those propensities which take us near the supreme Reality. Sins are the outcome of our attachment to the pleasures of sense, one cannot make out the truth without ridding oneself of this attachment. Attachment to sense-enjoyments is a characteristic of brutes: ignorantly taking it to be his very nature, man has flung himself far away from spirituality. That is why we are driven into the clutches of sorrow over and over again. Hence we should purge our minds of all evil tendencies. To entertain even the smallest sin in one's mind is to pave the way for eternal damnation. God has endowed man with a faculty by using which he can, if he so chooses, avoid all trace of sins. It is therefore that the Lord has enjoined man to be on his guard and to kill desire, has invincible enemy, which is the abode of all sins: –

जहि शत्रुं महाबाहो कामरूपं दुरासदम् ।
(Gitā III. 43).

Faith in God

A golden means of securing an aspirant against all deviations from the path of spiritual discipline is unflinching faith in God. An aspirant who has come to know the secret of Divine grace and mercy the Lord's vow of protecting His devotees, as well of His benevolence and love, and has pinned his faith in Him can never be disappointed. The fact that we fall from our Sādhanā at every step is mainly attributable to our lack of faith in God. The Lord says, "He who comes to recognize Me as the disinterested friend of all attains supreme peace."* This is really something very logical. A man who has come to know God as his disinterested friend feels armed by His strength and secure by virtue of his faith in Him and is thus able to get rid of his attachment to the pleasures of sense and purge himself of his sins. That we fail to recognize God as our eternal friend is our greatest misfortune. An aspirant should have a firm conviction that God is his most sincere friend, his eternal comrade; that He always protects him against sins and that he should exclusively take refuge in Him and think of Him and Him alone and leave the rest to Him. An aspirant who does so with supreme faith surmounts all obstacles without fail and attains God. The Lord says, "He who fixes his mind on Me easily overcomes all obstacles by My grace."

---

* सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति ।
(Gitā V. 29).

मच्चित्तः सर्वदुर्गाणि मत्प्रसादात्तरिष्यसि ।

(Gīta XVIII. 58)

—: o :—

CHAPTER VI

HUMBLE SUPPLICATION TO THE LORD

An excellent spiritual exercise for aspirants is to weep before the Lord with an open heart and in a piteous and pathetic manner. This should, however, be practised in solitude. If done before others, it may cause annoyance to them and may degenerate into hypocrisy. In the morning or evening, at night or after midnight, or better still at daybreak, when the aspirant is all by himself, he should squat easily on a mat and picture to his mind that the Lord is present in person before him and that He is hearing each and every word of his and also looking at him, From the viewpoint of the Śāstras too it is perfectly true that the Lord is present everywhere at every time and watches all that we do, and hears all that we say, If our conviction is strong enough, the form in which we seek to visualize the Lord appears before our mental eyes; and, if our love for Him develops, we may actually perceive the Lord by His grace.

The aspirant should squat on a mat or on the bare ground at a fixed hour and, as far as possible, on a fixed spot every day and, picturing the Lord to be present before him and recalling the sins committed by him in course of the livelong day, should confess everything before Him and, filled with great remorse, he should beg forgiveness of the Lord in a pathetic way and invoke necessary strength to resist all evil temptations in future.

He should then pray to the Lord

with a guileless heart in the following words, or in a similar spirit:—

"There is no one so crooked, so wicked and lustful as I. I am so ungrateful as to forget my own Creator. I have been running after sensuous pleasures, stuffing my belly like a village hog. Giving up the company of devotees of God, I am engaged day and night in the service of those who have turned their faces away from God. There is no sinner greater than I; nay, I am the most notorious of all those who are sunk in vice. This depraved soul has no refuge except Thee, O Lord of Lakṣmī."*

" O Befriender of the afflicted, where am I to go leaving Thy blessed feet ? There is no one in this world other than Thee. O Protector of the forlorn, who will cast merciful looks on me. There is no end to my sins, O Lord; I feel very despondent when I look into my sins, and see no way of my redemption even in millions of birth; but as soon as I remember your vow I am filled with hope and am reminded of the reassuring words you addressed to your friend and devotee Arjuna on the battlefield, when the latter resorted to Him for protection:—

---

* मो सम कौन कुटिल खल कामी ।
जिन तनु दियो ताहि बिसरायो, ऐसो नमकहरामी ॥
भरि भरि उदर विषयको धायो जैसे सूकर ग्रामी ।
हरिजन छाड़ि हरी बिमुखनकी निसिदिन करत गुलामी ॥
पापी कौन बड़ो है मोते, सब पतितन मैं नामी ।
सूर पतित को ठौर कहाँ है तुम बिनु श्रीपति स्वामी ॥

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥
क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।
कौतेन्य प्रति जानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥
सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

"Even if the vilest sinner worships Me with exclusive devotion, he should be accounted a saint; for he has rightly resolved. (He is positive in his belief that there is nothing like devoted worship of God.) Speedily he becomes virtuous and secures lasting peace. Know it for certain, Arjuna, that My devotee never falls."

"Resigning all your duties to Me, the all-powerful and all-supporting Lord, take refuge in Me alone. I shall absolve you of all sins, worry not,"

"How inspiring and encouraging these words are! Who else than Thee can evince such large-heartedness? 'There is no one so magnanimous as Thou.'* But I know not how to worship Thee with an undivided heart and take refuge in Thee to the exclusion of all others. I have wasted countless lives and even the present life so far in slavish attachment to sensuous pleasures alone. They alone have appeared agreeable to me. I know not the way to adore Thee. Of course, the severe trials to which I have been subjected by worldly pleasures have grown unbearable to me now. Do therefore remember Thy vow, my Lord, and take me under Thy protection and give me strength of mind not to forget Thy soul bewitching form and sacred name even for a moment.

"O Friend of the wretched! who else is there to commiserate the miserable?

"There is no one so charitably disposed and compassionate to the poor as Thou art. Whomsoever I approached with my tale of woe I find wretched like myself There are so many lords among gods, men, sages, Nāgas and demons; but they are so only so long as Thou art favourably disposed towards them. It is well-known in all the three worlds and in all ages, and all the four Vedas declare it, that Thy supremacy exists at all times, namely, in the beginning, middle and end. After begging of Thee a beggar is no longer called a beggar. Hearing of Thy benevolent nature, kindly disposition and bright renown, I have come to beg a boon of Thee. O darling of Daśaratha, Thou hast accepted as Thy own even slabs of stone (Ahalyā), beasts (monkeys), trees and birds (like Jaṭāyu), and transformed paupers into kings. Thou art the protector of the poor and I am a poor creature calling myself Thine. Pray declare me only once as Thine."*

---

* ऐसो को उदार जग माहीं ।

"O refuge of outcast beggars! there is no one else who may clasp poor miserable creatures to his bosom like Thee. Even he who is detested by the whole world, nay, who is deserted by his own near and dear ones and to whom no one likes even to speak, receives Thy patronage, You take him forth within Your arms and begin to fondle him and, pressing him to Your bosom make him fearless. You gave shelter with great warmth of feeling to Vibhīṣaṇa, who was stricken with fear of Rāvaṇa; You assumed the form of cloth for the sake of Draupadī, the consort of Pāṇḍavas; It was You who ran bare-footed to rescue the chief of elephants on hearing his invocation! I can recall no fallen soul from whom You have kept back Your mercy even after he has called You. O Bestower of safety, I take refuge in Thee with all my being; I am thine, pray take me under Thy benign care, my Lord!

---

* दीनको दयालु दानि दूसरो न कोऊ।
जासों दीनता कहौं हौं देखौं दीन सोऊ॥ १॥

सुर नर मुनि असुर नाग साहिब तौ घनेरे।
तौ लौं जौं लौं रावरे न नेकु नयन फेरे॥ २॥

त्रिभुवन तिहुँ काल विदित बेद बदत चारी।
आदि अंत मध्य राम साहिबी तिहारी॥ ३॥

तोहि माँगि माँगनो न माँगनो कहायो।
सुनि सुभाव सीलु सुजसु जाचन जन आयो॥ ४॥

पाहन पसु विटप बिहग अपने करि लीन्हे।
महाराज दसरथके रंक राय कीन्हे॥ ५॥

तू गरीवको निवाज, हौं गरीव तेरो।
बारक कहिये कृपालु तुलसिदास मेरो॥ ६॥

"Thou art compassionate, O Lord! and I, deserving of compassion; Thou art a donor and I, a beggar. I am a notorious sinner and Thou art the destroyer of sins Thou art a protector of the forlorn and is there anyone so forlorn as I? There is no one so afflicted as I and no allayer of

LIBRARY
No.........
Shri [illegible] mayee Ash
BANARAS

suffering as Thou. Thou art the all-pervading Brahma, and I am embodied soul; Thou art my Master and I, Thy slave; Thou art my father and mother, teacher and friend, and my well-wisher in every way. Thou art related to me in so many ways; hold me in whatever relation You choose. O merciful Lord! let Tulasidas receive protection at Thy feet, howsoever it may be possible."*

"O Redeemer of the fallen! O protector of the afflicted, O ocean of mercy! virtuous or vile, I am Thine and have now taken refuge in Thee. O wealth of the poor, O refuge of the vile, O bestower of alms on beggars! I want nothing else. I aspire not for wisdom or control of mind, penance or muttering of spells, riches or honour, learning or intelligence, wife or son, an abode in heaven or the nether regions or any other object or position. I seek not Vaikuṇṭha or Your Supreme Abode, nay, not even emancipation or final beatitude. I long for one thing only, viz. that You may count me as Your bond-slave; only declare once that I am Thine. Like Goswami Tulasidas I too pray that "The proud consciousness that I am Thy servant and Thou, my Master may never leave me even in an unguarded moment."*

---

* तू दयालु, दीन हौं, तू दानि, हौं भिखारी ।
हौं प्रसिद्ध पातकी, तू पापपुंजहारी ।।१।।
नाथ तूं अनाथको, अनाथ कौन मो सों ।
मो समान आरत नहिं, आरतिहर तो सों ।।२।।
ब्रह्म तूं, हौं जीव हौं, तूं ठाकुर, हौं चेरो ।
तातु मातु गुरु सखा, तूं सब बिधि हितु मेरो ।।३।।
तोहि मोहि नाते अनेक, मानिए जो भावे ।
ज्यों त्यों तुलसी कृपालु चरन सरन पावें ।।४।।

"That is all. Steeped in this consciousness, let me roam about fearlessly in the world. And, wherever I go, let me behold the gracious hand of the Lord over my head at all times.

"O my Lord, my only support, O protector of my life! Relying on Thy spontaneous mercy, I have cast myself at Thy door. Where am I to go? No one except Thyself is prepared to give me shelter. I have knocked about here and there and tried all, but could not get anything and only forfeited the respect of others. Far from giving me shelter, no one even cared to look at me. They, however, did me a good turn inasmuch as they opened my eyes, and dispelled all false notions. I thus became despondent and felt dejected and lost all faith in worldly enjoyments. Now I have come to know the true worth of sensual enjoyments, which though appearing attractive at first sight, are like so many diseases. Now I find no supporter other than Thyself just as a sea-gull hovering about a ship finds no other place to perch upon. O ocean of mercy! take compassion on me now and open the gates of Thy mansion soon. Let me have a glimpse of Thy bewitching form, my Lord, and let me hear Thy sweet voice. May that enrapturing divine melody resound through every pore of my skin and let the chord of my heart beat in consonance with that melody. Let this frame of mine be thrilled with joy and the bud of my heart open out all its petals and let Thy tender feet dance on those petals like a pair of bees. Let me go mad after Thee and forget all about my body and mind and then behold Thy lovely form, swarthy as a fresh rainy cloud, in every particle of matter. O Lord! let my name be registered as Thy slave and let me be armed with Thy strength, so that all sins and afflictions may be scared away and knowing me to be Thy servant, never come to me again."

---

* अस अभिमान जाइ नहि भोरे।
मैं सेवक रघुपति पति मोरे॥

We can derive great strength by praying in this spirit daily. The aspirant becomes fearless when he is convinced that he is a servant of the Lord and that the Lord is his Master. Delusion and infatuation, sins and afflictions, can no longer approach him. As a servant of the state and armed with the power of the state, even an ordinary policeman fears none and exercises his authority over the biggest citizen. Can there be any limit, then, to the strength of the man who has found his Master in the Lord of the whole universe, who is capable of doing, undoing and altering things (कर्तुमकर्तुमन्यथाकर्तुम्). Not only does such a devotee become fearless himself but he is also able to make other fear-stricken creatures of the world fearless.

—:o:—

CHAPTER VII

SELF-SURRENDER TO THE LORD

Self-surrender to the Lord is by far the highest, yet the easiest road to success for an aspirant. To place oneself at the feet of the Lord is the secret taught by all the scriptures and marks the culmination of all spiritual endeavour. It was this hidden secret which the Blessed Lord disclosed in the end to His beloved friend and devotee Arjuna, after He had finished His discourse on Jñāna and Vijñāna, Devotion and Action, and so on. It is through this supreme discipline that an aspirant can attain to the highest pinnacle of spiritual advancement.

Self-surrender does not mean that a man should abandon his duties in life and sit idle, with his hands and feet withdrawn from activity. Some people arrive at the wrong conclusion that it is God who does everything and makes us do what He likes; that it is His energy that works in all of us and that our duty simply is to sit quiet. This is, however, a great misconception. Self-surrender does not consist in inactivity. In the act of self-surrender it is the Self (Ātmā) that is offered first of all, and along with it the mind, the ego, the intellect and the body, all are dedicated to the Lord. This being done, the aspirant distinctly begins to feel that it is the Lord who is functioning through his body, mind and speech. Prior to this he believed that it was he himself who did everything; whereas now he feels that it is God who is doing everything. The consciousness that he is the doer is merged in the Divine Consciousness for the mind and intellect have been surrendered to the Lord. The mind and the intellect cease to function independently at this stage; the Divine will is his will now, the Divine thought is his thought, and the Divine activity is his activity. If the Lord is devoid of volition, thought and action, the devotee too must have none of these; for the inner sense (अन्तःकरण), consisting of the mind and the intellect, which is needed for these, is now owned by the Lord. The devotee ceases to have any control over it. That is why the Lord takes the whole responsibility in respect of such a devotee. He says :—"With mind and intellect dedicated to Me, thou shalt doubtless come to me" (मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्मामेवैष्यस्यसंशयम्), This, however, does not enjoin us to relinquish actions and become inactive; for in the same couplet He says : "सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च" (at all times think of Me and fight). He asks Arjuna to take to fighting, bearing in mind all the time that whatever is happening is a sport of the Lord and that every action is inspired by Him, he being a mere puppet in His hand, an automaton operated by that supreme Engineer and entirely subordinate to His will. It was in this spirit that Arjuna, giving up all considerations of right and wrong, declared in unequivocal terms that all his doubts had vanished and that he would do even as the Lord bade him do—'करिष्ये वचनं तव'.

Such a striver does not seek to renounce action or the world, nor does he feel disinclined to do so. He deems it his good fortune to continue to be used as a tool in the hands of the Lord. To him the world is no longer material, he sees spirit and spirit alone manifesting itself and carrying on its wonderful game every where and at every time. He looks upon the whole universe as manifestation of the Lord and all activity as a divine sport (लीला); that is why he always takes part in that game and serves the world as an image of the Lord. But while doing so he never feels that he is serving the world or performing his duty;

for he has no longer any duty to perform. A puppet has no sense of duty: it automatically dances at the pull of the hidden showman. Nor is it necessary for him to have any sense of duty; for he has made over his reins to an expert driver. To say nothing of wordly enjoyments, which are exceedingly trivial, nay, quite worthless and which an aspirant would not care even to look at,—for they no longer appear to him as anything apart from the Divine sport (Līlā), even the highest celestial regions are nothing but a scene of His sport and are no longer able to attract his mind; he always regards himself as a plaything in the hands of the sportive Lord. Whenever the Lord may carry on His enchanting eternal sport, which is going on uninterrupted everywhere, he always finds himself in the hands of the Divine Lord and never goes out of His sight. Why, then, should he seek to have himself shifted from one scene of the game to another, or demur if he is so shifted? Of course, he does not agree to his being dissociated from the game or kept out of His sight of such a proposal ever comes before him from the Lord. This is what the Lord says in the following verse of *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* :—

सालोक्यसार्ष्टिसामीप्यसारूप्यैकत्वमप्युत ।
दीयमानं न गृह्णन्ति विना मत्सेवनं जनाः ॥

"My devotees do not accept even the five kinds of liberation in lieu of the privilege to serve Him."

Though performing all his worldly duties, such a devotee really does nothing, his bodily service, his taking to business, his displaying valour on the field of battle, and his imparting knowledge, everything is a part of the Divine Līlā. He fares in the world as a clever and dutiful actor in this Divine drama. His actions and his proclivity to action are, therefore, not actuated by the ego but God-inspired. Such a devotee, whose actions are a part of the Divine Līlā is ever free from the bondage of actions in the shape of good and evil consequences. The Lord is ever present with him, inasmuch as the strings of his life are always in His hands. Salvation is doubtless eager to woo him and to be taken into his service and sometimes even goes the length of clinging to his feet. A Sanskrit poet has beautifully expressed this idea in the following verse :—

घनः कामोऽस्माकं तव तु भजनेऽन्यत्र न रुचि-
स्तवैवाङ्घ्रिद्वन्द्व नतिषु रतिरस्माकमतुला ।
सकामे निष्कामा सपदि तु सकामा पदगता
सकामास्मान् मुक्तिर्भजति महिमायं तव हरे ।

"Our heart is set on Thy remembrance only, O Lord; we have no liking for anything else. We are extremely fond of bowing to Thy lotus-like feet alone, Yet, having rejected the overtures of those who are fond of worldly enjoyments and finding no shelter elsewhere, this maiden of Mukti (final beatitude) clings to our feet with great fondness and begins to serve us! Such is Thy Divine glory, O Lord."

Such devotee do not like to fall into the clutches of Mukti even though she woos them. The whole responsibility in respect of such advanced aspirants naturally rests with God. He even proclaimed to Arjuna :—

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

"I shall obsolve you of all sins, worry not."

We are hopelessly dull-headed, incredulous and wanting in faith. Having fallen a prey to various temptations and being repeatedly frustrated in our efforts we have become sceptics. The mean craving for worldly enjoyments and the flowery utterances contained in the Śāstras, prescribing certain religious rites as a means of procuring such enjoyments, have cast a spell of delusion over us. That is why we do not repose full faith in the aforementioned loving assurance of the Lord and fail to dedicate ourselves exclusively to Him. And hence it is that we are repeatedly falling into troubles of various kinds and leading a life of unrest and misery; and wearied and oppressed like a traveller who has lost his way, we know not what to do. Indeed we have been reduced to a pitiable condition and in order to rid ourselves of this plight we should practise self-surrender to God with a resolute will. We should further try to feel divine inspiration in every action of ours, to remain cheerful in every circumstance, taking both pleasure and pain to be His merciful dispensation.

and to perform our duties like an automaton without any selfish interest and with our thoughts always fixed on Him.

It is, however, not enough simply to repeat the words "I am at Thy mercy, O Lord." "I have dedicated myself to Thee," and so on. What we shall have to do is to dedicate to Him all that we hold as our own. Every resolve, every musing, every thought, every desire and every action, proceeding from the ego, the mind, the intellect and the body, will have to be offered to Him. The mind and the senses, which are running after worldly enjoyments, will have to be reined in and turned towards God. And one need only take shelter in Him in order to rid himself of all fears. The following declaration of Lord Śrī Rāma, contained in the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, is literally true:—

सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते ।
अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद् व्रतं मम ॥

"Whoever takes refuge in Me only once and seeks My protection with the words 'I am Thine,' I grant him security against all creatures: such is My vow."

This vow of the Lord is undoubtedly true. One has to dedicate oneself to the Lord only once in order to become fearless for all time to come. In fact, self-surrender is effected only once. Surrender means giving away. Making over and taking over are simultaneous acts, which are done only once. A thing made over or taken over once is transferred for good. As a matter of fact, we never dedicate ourselves to Him. The word "surrender" is no doubt familiar to us; but we know not what it means. Our wisdom, our meditation and our prayers are either for show or are actuated by the desire to procure worldly enjoyments. Our thought-currents are ever flowing towards the world, just as rivers are incessantly rushing towards the ocean. How can we be fearless under such circumstances ? The Lord, who dwells in the heart of all of us, would not be caught by our empty talks. Truly speaking, we are haunted by fears of various kinds. For instance, we are afraid of our own death or that of our son, or loss of fortune, reputation or false prestige, and that of displeasing our family and society, and of many more things too numerous to mention.

In fact, we have gathered a host of fears around us. That is why we feel nervous even in giving up such a trifling thing as tobacco lest it may have a prejudicial effect on our health, hesitate in breaking a most pernicious custom for fear of public scandal or of displeasing the community and feel a trepidation in stating a fact for fear of the Government. It is on account of these fears that we grovel in sins of various kinds. This is a characteristic of the demoniac disposition. How can we dedicate ourselves to God so long as we go on adding to the stock of our sins under the influence of this demoniac disposition. The blessed Lord Himself says:—

न मां दुष्कृतिनो मूढाः प्रपद्यन्ते नराधमाः।
माययापहृतज्ञाना आसुरं भावमाश्रिताः॥

(Gītā VIII. 15)

"Those whose wisdom has been carried away by Māyā, and who have embraced the demoniac nature, such foolish and vile men of evil deeds do not adore Me."

Crushing all this host of fears, trampling them all under feet, we shall have to proceed onward with steady and unfaltering steps. Then alone shall we be become qualified for that fearless state of self-surrender to the Lord.

A Parable

Some people, who had grown sick of living in a distant land, wanted to return to their native place. They had their home somewhere at the foot of the Himalayas in the north of India. But, forgetting this, they started southward. Keenly eager to reach their home, they started running swiftly in the wrong direction. On the way, however, they met a few of their own co-villagers, who knew the right road and were proceeding towards the north. The latter were surprised to find their friends moving in the opposite direction and enquired as to where they were going. Their friends replied that they were going homeward. They all belonged to the same village. The other party, then, told their misguided friends that they were all going in the opposite direction and were getting farther and farther from their home. They also warned their friends that if they went further they would find the return journey extremely difficult, as there was no resting-place on that road, no trees for shelter and no water to drink. Hot winds blowing in that region would blight their bodies, the journey would bring them great fatigue and not a drop of water would be available anywhere even if they died for thirst. They, therefore exhorted their friends to give up the wrong road they had taken and follow them along the right and straight path they were treading. But most of these unfortunate fellows did not care even to listen to this wholesome advice. For they thought spending any time in listening to that talk would mean so much delay in reaching home. Others patiently heard what their friends told them; but on careful consideration they came to the conclusion that their friends' advice did not contain much sense. They too, therefore, resumed their journey in opposite direction. There were still others who paused for a while and mused over the words of their friends. They turned round, looked at the right path, paused a while and realized their mistake and were even inclined to follow the right track; but they were too fond of their companions to part company with them and resumed the wrong track though doubtful of its correctness. Some of these halted at some distance and after careful deliberation turned back, whereas others were prevailed upon by their companions and resumed their journey in the wrong direction. Only a few of the whole lot took the cue at once and turned right about; and even as they turned and their whole body faced the right track they were much relieved to behold the neat bright road and to catch a glimpse of their home itself at some distance. They felt no inclination afterwards even to look back. Their old companions called them and asked them to return; but, without even turning their face towards them, they replied that they were loth to come back since they had found the right track. They further told their erstwhile companions that they had already begun to have a glimpse of their home in front of them and that their love for their native place did not allow them to turn their back upon it in spite of the latters' protestations. They, therefore, did not return and, being rid of all botheration, soon reached their happy home.

Similarly, there are four types of men in this world: the depraved, the sensually-minded, the aspiring and the liberated. Everyone is in quest of God in the shape of supreme and eternal bliss, everybody runs after happiness; but most of us go astray and take to the wrong path. Consequently we have to undergo hardships and troubles of various kinds and do not get even a glimpse of peace and happiness. Such of us as do not care even to listen to the words of saints and other holy men who are treading the path of righteousness, and are madly running after wealth, progeny, sense-gratification, sensuous enjoyments and fame all day long, are classed as low. They themselves do not know where they are going and are drifting aimlessly like blind men. Then there are sensually-minded men who now and then incidentally listen to the spiritual talks of saints and sages, who are compassionate by nature; but they do not find much sense in what these holy men say and hence, even after listening to it, they do not like to act up to it. Next come those who aspire for liberation. There are two classes of them: the easy-going and the earnest. Those that are easy-going seek the company of the wise, attentively listen to their discourses on spiritual subjects and even want to tread the path of righteousness and thereby realize God. They even try to alter the course of their life; that is to say, they seek to turn their mind away from worldly pleasures for some moments at least and concentrate it on God; but their constant association with worldly people casts a spell of infatuation over them and does not allow them to leave the old rut. The earnest aspirants, on the other hand, take a decisive step and turn their mind wholly towards God. Once we have firmly and fully applied ourselves to this task—turned our face towards Him who is the eternal abode of supreme bliss, we begin to experience a unique joy and the Lord begins to appear very close to us, nay, we begin to perceive Him everywhere within and without ourselves. We can no longer devote our mind and heart to the external appearance of the world. This is what is meant by turning our face towards God only once. Taking self-surrender to consist in mere outward attitude of surrender—in addressing words expressive of surrender, we begin to doubt the veracity of the statements contained in the scriptures and argue within ourselves that, since we have not yet been saved in spite to our having thrown ourselves at the mercy of that Lord and dedicated ourselves to Him on one occasion long ago. It is just possible the verse quoted above from the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki may be an interpolation or simply an alluring statement. They never stop to think that he who has completely surrendered himself to God even once can no longer be haunted by fear of any kind nor can he have any anxiety about his own redemption. He who is still haunted by fear or is worried about his salvation cannot be said to have surrendered himself. Whereas the fault lies with us, who have our gaze fixed on the numberless objects of sense-gratification and worldly enjoyment and seek happiness therein, the fun of it is that we doubt the word of the Lord Himself and the inspired utterance of highly devout Ṛṣis. What a travesty of reason !

In order to prepare ourselves for self-surrender to God we shall have to guard against sins and wrong doings, rid ourselves of our demoniacal disposition and recover the wisdom snatched away by Māyā (illusion), through noble deeds and worship of God. Through that wisdom we shall have to grasp the real nature of God, and then to dedicate our life to Him with a firm and single-minded determination. This is what is meant by turning our face towards God only once. And the moment we turn our face towards Him the whole stock of our sins is burnt and we attain that supreme state of everlasting peace, from which there is no fall. By insisting on one's giving up sins we do not mean that a man should dedicate himself to God after he has reaped the fruit of all his sins. All that we mean thereby is that he should no longer commit sins and should dedicate the rest of his life with single-minded determination to the Lord. The rest is taken care of by the Lord Himself, who says:—

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥
क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रति जानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥
(Gītā IX. 30-31)

"Even if the vilest sinner worships Me with exclusive devotion, he should be

accounted a saint; for he has rightly resolved. He is positive in his belief that there is nothing like devoted worship of God. Speedily he becomes virtuous and secures lasting peace. Know it for certain, Arjuna, that My devotee never falls.'

Relying on these re-assuring words of the Lord and knowing Him, through wisdom, to be our nearest and dearest one, nay, the very indweller of our heart, we must take refuge in Him. We must forswear irreverence, sloth, indolence, fear, doubt, dullness, unbelief and other evils and march on with great vigour and zeal, aspiring for participation in the cosmic game of the Divine Lord.

The gates of the sacred temple of the Lord are always open to all. He is accessible to all who long to meet Him. He loves all who love Him. Without wisdom, of course, it is not possible to comprehend His transcendental nature, and without knowing that transcendental and ineffable character, which transcends even Sattvaguṇa, real surrender is not possible. Even dry wisdom alone would present serious difficulties in attaining to that stage.

have to grasp the real nature of God, and then to dedicate our life to Him with a firm and single-minded determination. This is what is meant by turning our face towards God only once. And the moment we turn our face towards Him the whole stock of our sins is burnt and we attain that supreme state of everlasting peace, from which there is no fall. By insisting on one's giving up sins we do not mean that a man should dedicate himself to God after he has reaped the fruit of all his sins. All that we mean thereby is that he should no longer commit sins and should dedicate the rest of his life with single-minded determination to the Lord. The rest is taken care of by the Lord Himself, who says:—

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥
क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रति जानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥
(Gītā IX. 30-31)

"Even if the vilest sinner worships Me with exclusive devotion, he should be accounted a saint; for he has rightly resolved. He is positive in his belief that there is nothing like devoted worship of God. Speedily he becomes virtuous and secures lasting peace. Know it for certain, Arjuna, that My devotee never falls.'

Relying on these re-assuring words of the Lord and knowing Him, through wisdom, to be our nearest and dearest one, nay, the very indweller of our heart, we must take refuge in Him. We must forswear irreverence, sloth, indolence, fear, doubt, dullness, unbelief and other evils and march on with great vigour and zeal, aspiring for participation in the cosmic game of the Divine Lord.

The gates of the sacred temple of the Lord are always open to all. He is accessible to all who long to meet Him. He loves all who love Him. Without wisdom, of course, it is not possible to comprehend His transcendental nature, and without knowing that transcendental and ineffable character, which transcends even Sattvaguṇa, real surrender is not possible. Even dry wisdom alone would present serious difficulties in attaining to that stage.

There must be a sweet undercurrent of nectarean love flowing along with it. The true nature of God cannot be realized merely by identifying oneself with Brahma (the Supreme Reality) unless one has deep love—supreme devotion (पराभक्ति)—to the Lord. The *Gītā* says:—

ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।
समः सर्वेषु भूतेषु मद्भक्तिं लभते पराम् ॥
भक्त्या मामभिजानाति यावान् यश्चास्मि तत्त्वतः ।
ततो मां तत्त्वतो ज्ञात्वा विशते तदनन्तरम् ॥

(XVIII. 54-55)

"Established in identity with Brahma, (who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified), and cheerful in mind, the Sānkhyayogī no longer grieves nor craves for anything. The same to all beings, such a Yogi attains supreme devotion to Me. Through that supreme devotion he comes to know Me in reality, what and how great I am; and thereby knowing Me in essence he forthwith enters into My being."

The aspirant should, therefore, fondly remember God and mature his spirit of self-surrender to the Lord with a strong will every day. And according as his desire for self-surrender grows intense, the portals of His kingdom will automatically go on opening till at last a wonderful stream of nectar will flow from the feet of the Lord residing within his heart, and, splitting itself into the triple current of knowledge, dispassion and love, will inundate his mind and soul with divine consciousness and rid him of the fear of birth and death. The whole aspect of the world will at once change for him and he will look upon everything as belonging to God. Nay, he will perceive everywhere God and His Eternal Līlā and in that Līlā too He will behold Śrī Hari and Śrī Hari alone: –

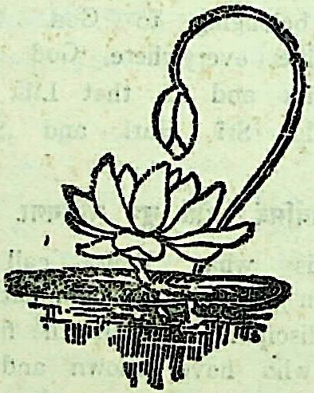
मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव ।

This is what they call Mukti (Liberation); this is the culmination of all spiritual discipline, this is the final goal. Devotees who have known and realized this Truth, and who rejoice in their Self, are really very difficult to find—

वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥

—:o:—

Gaury Shankar Press, Varanasi-1.



The Gita Press, Gorakhpur
(India)